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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, September 5, 1932.

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Subject: "Homemade Jellies." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U.S.D.A.

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You know, I sometimes feel that the things we talk about in these Housekeepers' Chats are just a little -- well, you might say, just a little commonplace. I have trouble in making bright, sparkling, bon mots about such necessary household chores as removing grease stains from wool garments, or making a nutritious Monday luncheon from the left-overs of the Sunday dinner.

Now these subjects for our chats are highly important subjects in these days of economy. And we talk about them whether they inspire fine words and beautiful thoughts or whether they don't.

But let's talk today about a branch of economy in the household that has in it all the making of poetry -- homemade fruit jellies. Do you remember how the poet, Keats, described the jellies on the banquet table in his epic poem, "The Eve of St. Agnes?" -- "With jellies soother than the creamy curd, and lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon."

Jelly even inspires usually prosaic home economists to picture language. Let me read you a description of the ideal jelly from the scientists in the U. S. Bureau of Home Economics. They say:

"An ideal jelly has a bright color and delicate flavor, characteristic of the fruit from which it is made. When turned onto a plate, a mold of jelly should be translucent and should hold its shape but quiver when the plate is moved. Jelly should be so tender that it cuts easily with a spoon, yet breaks with a sharp cleavage line and shows sharp faces."

Ah, but sharp-faced jelly brings smiles to the faces of gentlemen. So, let's consult the home economists further for directions on how to make jellies with sharp faces, tender textures, and quivering translucence.

I give you as an authority on jelly making, Mrs. Fanny Walker Yeatman, the supreme high potentate of jelly makers in the Bureau of Home Economics. For this authority, I bring you this morning the story of how she turned out by the gross glasses of jelly which have captured the essence of exquisite flavor that old Father Sol and Mother Earth put into the grapes and the crabapples and the quinces and the winter apples of this bounteous season. Listen to Mrs. Yeatman's story:

"For my September jelly making, I use wild grapes, (fox grapes, some people call them) and cultivated grapes like Concord and others of that type; quinces and crabapples; and winter apples, such as the winesap.

"I always select firm, high quality fruit for jelly making. If possible, I get it slightly underripe. I can use over ripe fruit, but when I do, I have

to add lemon juice at the time I mix the sugar with the extracted fruit juice, but more of that later. I want to be logical and tell my jelly making story in the order of my jelly making operations.

"Now after I select the firm, high quality, slightly under ripe fruit, I wash it thoroughly and discard any damaged parts. I leave the skins on grapes. I remove the stems and blossom ends from apples and quinces and cut the fruit into pieces, but I don't remove the cores or skins.

"I prepare the fruit in small lots. With grapes and apples, I prepare only about 8 pounds of fruit at a time. If I am in for a whole day of jelly making, of course I cook one lot right after another, but I never have a large lot cooking at one time. In other words, I cook the fruit in small lots, about 8 pounds of grapes or apples at a time, and just as soon as one lot starts dripping in the jelly bag, I start more fruit cooking. Now this matter of cooking the fruit to extract the juice is one step in jelly making where you can go wrong. Be sure to add no more water than necessary. For apples and crabapples and quinces, I add one cup of water to each pound of prepared fruit, or water to cover. For cultivated grapes, such as Concord, I add no more than one-fourth cup of water to each pound of fruit. In fact, I have made good grape jelly without adding any water. For wild grapes I add one cup of water to each pound of prepared fruit.

"You see, jelly will not 'jell' until it is concentrated to a certain point. So if the juice is too watery, you have to boil off the excess water. That makes for longer cooking of the jelly. Too long cooking spoils flavor and color of the jelly.

"Of course, you want to know how long I cook the fruit. Well, I begin timing only when the fruit begins to boil. After they start boiling, grapes need 5 to 10 minutes to cook soft; apples and quinces need about 25 to 30 minutes - all depending on the firmness of the fruit.

"After I have boiled the fruit the right length of time, I pour it at once into a jelly bag of cotton flannel or of 2 or 3 thicknesses of good quality cheese cloth. I let the juice drip out and I never squeeze the bag. Of course, when the drops are few and far between, I press the bag lightly to start the flow again.

"I have found that I can get two extractions of juice from the pomace of some fruits, such as crabapples. They are very rich in jelly making power. As soon as the juice quits dripping from the pomace after the first cooking of crabapples, I turn the pomace back into the kettle, barely cover it with water, boil it again, and make a second extraction of the juice exactly as I made the first one. I prefer to mix the juices of the first and second extractions and make the mixed juice into jelly. But some people have told me that they prefer to keep the two extractions separate and make jelly from each lot. Really, if all the juice has good color and strong jelly making power, there is little choice.

"When I get the juice all extracted, I am ready to add the sugar to it. Using the right proportion of sugar to extracted fruit juice is a very important point. With fruits like crabapples which are exceptionally rich in pectin, I use one cup of sugar to one cup of fruit juice. I also use sugar cup

for cup with wild grapes. But with quinces and apples and cultivated grapes, I get better jellies when I use only three quarters of a cup to one cup of juice.

"Now is the logical time to tell you about adding lemon juice to the fruit juice extracted from overripe fruits. Whenever I'm making jelly from concord grapes or quinces that are overripe, I add one tablespoon of strained lemon juice to each cup of the fruit juice. You want to know just when I add it, don't you? Well, I always add the strained lemon juice just after I combine the fruit juice and the sugar and put to the boiling test. Now, about the sugar. A lot of women write in to the Bureau of Home Economics asking if there is any difference in cane sugar and beet sugar for jelly making. We always answer that there is not a bit of difference. We have made repeated tests in our laboratory. Every test shows that a refined cane sugar and refined beet sugar are equally good for jelly making.

"The final step in cooking the jelly is boiling down the combined sugar and juice to the jelly test. Let me emphasize again that I make up a small quantity of jelly in each batch. I generally use only 6 to 8 cups of juice and with the right proportion of sugar this yields 12 to 14 glasses of jelly. That's an easy quantity to handle and it boils down in a very short time. Sometimes my crabapple or my currant jelly reaches the jelly test in less than 10 minutes. By the way, I cook the fruit juice and sugar in a large flat-bottomed kettle, and I boil it rapidly.

"As for the jelly test -- I still find the 'sheeting off' test the most reliable. To make the test, dip a large spoon into the boiling syrup, and lift up the spoon so that the syrup runs off the side. As the syrup cooks down it reaches a stage when it no longer runs off the spoon in a steady stream, but separates into two distinct lines of drops which 'shoot' together. I stop the cooking as soon as the boiling syrup reaches this stage.

"Then I let the hot syrup stand in the kettle while I lift clean jelly glasses from boiling water. As soon as I have the hot glasses in place, I skim off the film from the hot jelly, and pour the skimmed jelly into the hot glasses very carefully. I make sure that the jelly does not splash up or drip onto the rim of any glass.

"Finally, I let the jelly stand until set -- for 12 hours or longer, then seal the glasses well with melted paraffin."

And that's Mrs. Yeatman's story of how she makes superlative jelly.

Tomorrow: We'll have our economy menu and a little talk on salads for low cost meals.

